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LETTER DATED 22 MAY 1992 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ARMENIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Given the confusion and misinformation surrounding events in Nagorno-Karabakh and the Nakhichevan-Armenia border in recent days, I thought I would take this opportunity to apprise you of the government of the Republic of Armenia's position concerning the situation.

With respect to the situation along the Nakhichevan-Armenia border, as you may know, a mountain range runs along this border. In 1990, after the first conflict erupted on the border between forces from Armenia and Nakhichevan, the then Soviet Army established several positions on both sides of the border allegedly to prevent escalation of the conflict. Later that year, the Soviet Army abandoned these positions and allowed Nakhichevan to locate forces at these fire points on both sides of the border. Alarmed by the impact of this action, especially taking into account the close proximity of this region to the Turkish border, the government of Armenia forged several verbal agreements with the government of Nakhichevan calling for the creation of a demilitarized zone along the border and for dispatch of international observers.

These agreements have been ignored by the leadership in Nakhichevan. Since 1990, the Armenian villages in the Ararat valley have been fired upon sporadically by the Azerbaijani forces from these mountaintop positions.

On 16 May, the Azerbaijani forces situated on these mountaintop positions intensified their attacks on the villages in Armenia's Ararat valley, killing nine people and wounding dozens more. Armenia was compelled to respond to this attack and Armenian border guards were able to force the Azerbaijanis back across the border and retake fire positions only on the Armenian side. Contrary to some reports, Armenian border guards have neither attacked nor entered the city of Sadarak.

Immediately after the outbreak of fighting occurred, the President of Armenia contacted the President of the Nakhichevan Mejlis, Gaidar Aliyev, to convey to him that Armenia was ready to sign a cooperation treaty with

Nakhichevan to turn the border between Armenia and Nakhichevan into an overall security and stability zone. Following their conversation President Ter-Petrossian issued an official statement reiterating Armenia's commitment to signing a cooperation treaty, a copy of which I have enclosed for your convenience.

It is the government of Armenia's position that the recent actions by Azerbaijani forces in Nakhichevan have been undertaken to destabilize the situation along the Nakhichevan-Armenia border. Allegations that Armenia has launched military attacks against Nakhichevan have been manufactured to provide a pretext for direct intervention by third parties. Armenia rejects such dangerous political tendencies, which is why the President moved quickly to declare Armenia's intent to create a neutral zone along the border. Armenia does not want to see a further deterioration of the situation.

Armenia has appealed to the international community to obtain agreement from the leadership in Nakhichevan for a team of independent observers. We are confident that after visits to the area during the coming days by officials from the foreign embassies in Armenia and by the United Nations fact-finding mission the international community will be assured that Armenia is not attacking or entering the region of Nakhichevan. We welcome and encourage these visits. The government of Armenia is appreciative of the quick and decisive action of the United Nations Security Council, at the emergency meeting held on 12 May, to send a fact-finding mission to Nagorno-Karabakh and is encouraged by the mission's intention to include a visit to Nakhichevan. We are extremely impressed that the mission has taken into account the most recent developments and is altering its original schedule to respond to these developments.

Armenia and the representatives of Nagorno-Karabakh have repeatedly asked during this four-year-long conflict that the international community send peace-keeping missions to the region. These requests were made over and over to prevent the escalation of the conflict, however, until now those requests were not heeded.

With respect to the establishment of a humanitarian corridor to Nagorno-Karabakh, the Armenian government and the government of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic appealed repeatedly to the international community for the lifting of the blockades. Several months ago, the CSCE declared its intention to open such corridors so that the desperate conditions in Nagorno-Karabakh could be abated. However, no action was taken and the situation continued to deteriorate. Finally two weeks ago, the Azerbaijanis shelled the airport of Stepanakert, cutting off the region's last link to the outside world. With the population near starvation and without medicine or basic essentials, the self-defence units of Nagorno-Karabakh had no choice but to establish a corridor from Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia.

Prior to taking this action, the parliament of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic made an urgent appeal to the international community for help. They stated that the people of Nagorno-Karabakh could not exist much longer without

food and medicine, however, there was no response to this appeal. It should be recognized that the people of Nagorno-Karabakh have not only been blockaded physically, but their isolation has denied them a voice in the international community. During these last months while the CSCE has been mediating the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, they have not allowed representatives from Nagorno-Karabakh to participate in the negotiations which will eventually determine their fate. We must keep in mind that it is one thing for those involved in mediation efforts in Helsinki, New York or elsewhere to tell the people of Nagorno-Karabakh that they must not act, they must wait until the conflict is resolved through peaceful means, without allowing their participation and it is another thing to expect those who are watching their people dying from the lack of medicine and suffering from starvation not to act. The people of Nagorno-Karabakh waited for four years for help from the international community and no substantial help was forthcoming. They were forced to act for their own survival.

The corridor has already served to bring wounded to Armenia for medical treatment and flour to Nagorno-Karabakh to relieve hunger. This lifeline is vital to Nagorno-Karabakh since the area has been left with no other reliable link to the outside world. The necessity of establishing means by which to provide humanitarian assistance was one of the goals of the United Nations mission to Nagorno-Karabakh, as the United Nations Security Council has acknowledged the dire conditions of the population of the region.

The self-defence units from Nagorno-Karabakh have not occupied or entered the city of Lachin. They are stationed only alongside the road which extends from Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia. There were no deaths or injuries as the self-defence units secured the road. The sole purpose of these units is to maintain a safe corridor for the transportation of humanitarian aid. Armenia feels certain that the Nagorno-Karabakh self-defence units would accept the placement of peace-keeping forces along the corridor, as the act of the Nagorno-Karabakh forces was not an act of aggression but an act of self-defence. The purpose of the establishment of the corridor was not to seize territory, but to secure safe passage for humanitarian aid. Armenia is convinced that upon the dispatch of peace-keeping forces to the road between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia, the Nagorno-Karabakh defensive forces will withdraw.

Armenia is greatly concerned by the recent portrayal and perception of Armenia as an "aggressor". Much of the most recent information in the media and statements made by third parties concerning Nakhichevan and Nagorno-Karabakh has been inaccurate and without a factual basis. Armenia does not wish to see an expansion of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and has not committed acts of aggression. In some ways, it is ironic that a country of three and a half million people can suddenly become a force that threatens its neighbours which are more than 10 times its size.

The Armenian government remains committed to working towards a peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. However, it is the position of the government of Armenia that the only way to bring about a peaceful

resolution to the conflict is to obtain the immediate dispatch of peace-keeping forces to the region. At present, Armenia will continue to explore all forms of mediation, but without the placement of peace-keeping forces, Armenia fears tensions will continue to escalate, making the resolution of the conflict all but impossible. The passage of time has only increased the seriousness of the conflict, thus the time to act is now before the situation deteriorates any further.

I hope that this information will serve to be useful and I am available to speak with you about this in further detail at any time.

I would be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Alexander ARZOUMANIAN
Permanent Representative

Annex

Statement by Levon Ter-Petrossian, President of the Republic of Armenia

Armenia is commited to sign a cooperation treaty with Nakhijevan.

20 May 1992

Throughout the Karabagh conflict the relations between Armenia and Nakhijevan proved to be comparatively peaceful.

But recently certain activities are being undertaken in Nakhijevan to destabilize the situation along the Nakhijevani-Armenian border. Alongside with that it is purposefully alleged that the Republic of Armenia has launched military attacks against the Republic of Nakhijevan.

It is obvious that all these allegations have been manufactured by certain outside forces to prepare political grounds for a direct intervention.

Rejecting such dangerous political tendencies, that not only fail to bring peace and stability to the region, but also contribute to the deterioration of the situation, the government of the Republic of Armenia declares that today it is committed to sign an all-round cooperation treaty with the Republic of Nakhijevan to turn the border between Armenia and Nakhijevan into an overall security and stability zone.